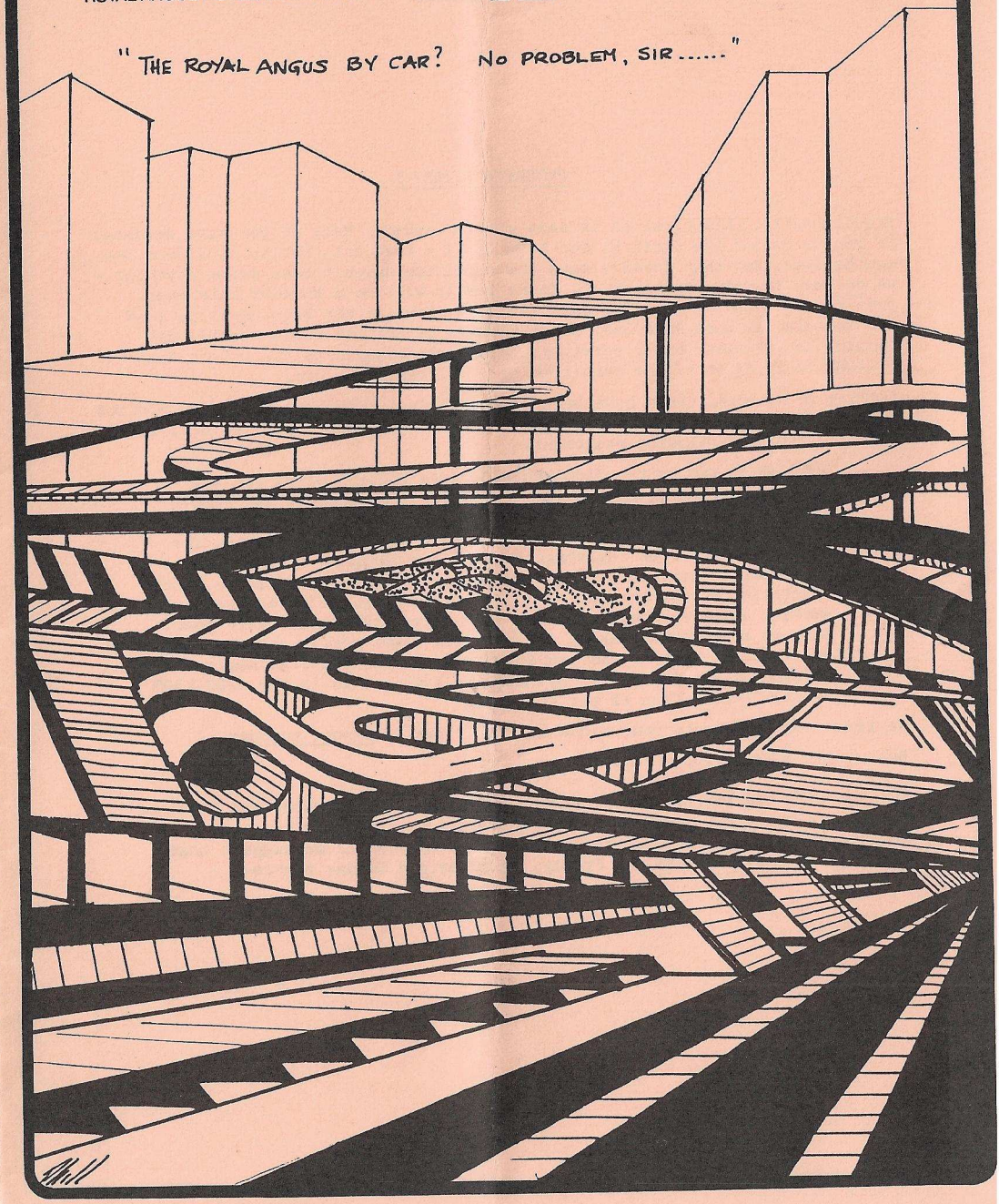
# NOVACON 12

Organised by the Birmingham Science Fiction Group

5TH–7TH November 1982
ROYAL ANGUS HOTEL, BIRMINGHAM



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## PROGRESS REPORT 1

Traditionally, this first PR is sent out in January. Many of you have wondered if you've missed the first PR for NOVACON 12 - fear not, for it is indeed 3-4 months late. But that doesn't mean the committee haven't been doing anything - we do have things under control. There really will be a NOVACON this year, just as there has been in the past 11 years. Even if the Brum Group decided not to hold any more NOVACONs, other members of British fandom would rush forward to volunteer their services. Ignore all rumours to the effect that NOVACON 12 is defunct, the committee have all resigned, etc.

Talking of rumours, there have been stories going around regarding the profits made at NOVACON and the perks received by the committees. So first off, we'd like to make the following statement:-

> NOVACON is run by the Birmingham Science Fiction Group and any profits go toward the running of the Group throughout the year. Committees of NOVACON do not receive free rooms at NOVACON - they pay for their own rooms at the same rate as other attendees. The only perks are free registration and, providing the convention is successful, there is a committee meal. This meal is entirely at the discretion of the convention chairman. To date, we've had good, hard-working committees so there has been a committee meal every year. Rumours of NOVACONs making in excess of £1000 profit and the committee getting free hotel rooms and free registration and free meals are unfounded. The profits of NOVACON, on average, is in the £200-£300 bracket - less than £1 per attendee.

We trust that this puts your minds at rest. Please, ignore rumours.

But...onto NOVACON...part 12.

The con will commence on the afternoon of Friday, 5th November and continue through to the early hours of Monday morning (but certainly not past breakfast!). To get the full enjoyment out of NOVACON 12 we suggest that you stay at the hotel for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

# Hotel and Room Rates

Once again we will be returning to The Royal Angus Hotel. To date, NOVACON has been held at the Angus in 1975,76,77,79,80 and 81. It's a modern hotel that has virtually all of the facilities required for a good convention. It's central meeting area (bar/lounge) is next to the con hall, book room and the restaurant. This feature has contributed greatly to the continued success of NOVACONs. It has over 200 rooms all with bathroom, colour TV and coffee/tea making facilities.

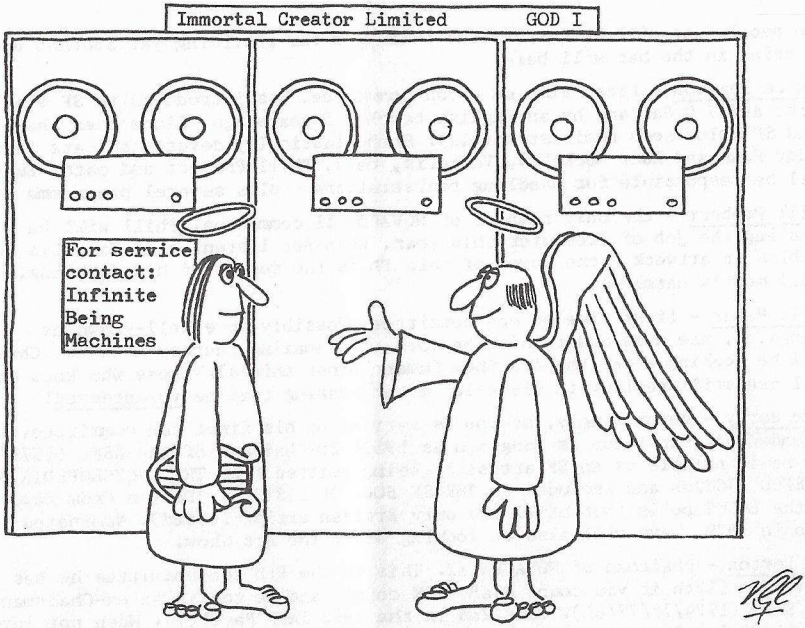
Room rates for NOVACON 12 are:-

Sharing a double/twin bedded room - £11.00 per person per night
Single room - £14.00 per night

These rates are inclusive of VAT at 15%, Service Charge and Full English Breakfast.

In addition to the a-la-carte restaurant being open each evening, the hotel will, as before, be providing cheap snack-type meals at lunch-time, early evening and at midnight. Details of these will be given in PR 3.

HOTEL BOOKING FORMS WILL BE SENT OUT WITH PROGRESS REPORT 2.




"Yes, most people are surprised at first!"

# Guest of Honour

We are extremely pleased to have Harry Harrison as Guest of Honour at NOVACON 12. Co-President of the Birmingham SF Group for several years, this is the first time Harry has been GoH at NOVACON. Harry Harrison has very strong ties with the city - the first time he was GoH anywhere was Brum in 1965 and it was here, in Birmingham, that he threw the infamous Burgess pork-pie at Brian Aldiss. Prolific SF author who started out writing and illustrating comic strips (notably BUCK ROGERS which he wrote for several years). His first novel was DEATHWORLD published in 1960. His latest books are PLANET OF NO RETURN (a sequel to PLANET OF THE DAMNED), INVASION: EARTH - just published in America - and the forthcoming STAINLESS STEEL RAT FOR PRESIDENT! which is due for publication round about the time of NOVACON 12.

# Committee

The people who will be responsible this year for providing yet another excuse to drink in the bar will be:-

Eunice Pearson - first time on a con committee. Was introduced to SF via Franz Kafka and J G Ballard by an English teacher 5 years ago. Since then she's only read SF (plus some feminist novels). Enthusiastically devoted to cats (namely Puddy Paws and Lucy Lockett), Vangelis, cats, Phill Probert and cats. Eunice will be responsible for handling registrations - plus several programme items.

Phill Probert - the only remnant of NOVACON 11 committee, Phill will be handling the job of Treasurer this year. When not listening to Vangelis he dabbles in artwork - the cover of this PR is the result of his dabbling. Still mostly harmless.

Chris Baker - first time on con committee. Possibly more well-known as 'Fangorn', the name under which he does some amazing fantasy artwork. Chris will be looking after the Art Show (among other things). Those who know Chris well are still reeling in disbelief after hearing that he volunteered!

Dave Hardy - surprisingly, he too is serving on his first con committee...he attended his first con as long ago as 1957! Ex-Chairman of the BSFG (1978/79/80) he is notable as an SF artist by being omitted from THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION and included in THE SF BOOK OF LISTS as 'Fallen from favour' in the LOCUS polls (but still the only British artist listed). Nominated for a Hugo in 1979. Dave will also be looking after the Art Show.

Rog Peyton - chairman of NOVACON 12. This is the 9th con-committee he has served on (12th if you count STAR TREK cons!) and he too is an ex-Chairman of the BSFG (1974/76/77/81). Came 2nd in the 1982 TAFF Race!(?). When not involved in organising SF events, his main hobbies are eating,and listening to music (but not Vangelis!)

# Programme

For the programme this year, we are hoping to make several changes from some of the recent NOVACONs. UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE, for instance, has been a very popular item at the last three NOVACONs but it is an item that requires a lot of preparation. Chris Morgan has done a tremendous job each year, gathering scores of questions, so we feel (and so does Chris!) that a rest is in order. To replace UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE, Jim Barker has offered to organise another FAN-TURN CHALLENGE which was featured in the Fan Room at this year's CHANNEL-CON. There'll be a round on Friday, 2nd on Saturday with the Final on Sunday. Other than the obligatory Auctions, GoH speech, Awards presentation and films, we've planned (or are in the process of planning) a debate, a panel discussion involving the new wave of Fiction fanzines and other items. Concerning the debate, we have a few possible motions under consideration but we'll be happy to consider any motions sent in by con members (or non-members!). If you have any subjects that you think may make a good debate, please write to Rog Peyton at the address at the end of this PR.

ART SHOW - We'll be organising several competitions around the Art Show - there will be categories to be voted on by con-members. Voting slips will be available Friday and Saturday, winners will be announced first thing Sunday morning. This will give you time to see what the winners are before the Art Show is taken down after lunch on Sunday. The Art Auction will be taking place about 4pm on Sunday.

FILMS - We'll be having more films than in previous years as we intend to run the film show through to the early hours on Friday and Sunday nights. Dave Hardy (with a little help from the rest of the committee) is in the process of booking the films at the moment. Actually, we've booked them by phone to see if they are available...they are...and we've confirmed our bookings by letter. All we need now are the hire companies' written confirmation. We can tell you that we have 2 shorts - HARDWARE WARS and CLOSET CASES OF THE NERD KIND plus 6 full-length features.

We can tell you that none of the 6 titles have ever been shown at British conventions before (would we dare show PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE again! Well... yes we would, but that's next year). Two of the films are real scoops - they aren't released on 16mm until this coming September. Another of the films hasn't been shown in UK cinemas outside London. The titles? Well we can tell you now that they are....
(What are these titles? Can the committee really find 6 films never shown at UK conventions? Can the hire companies get things right this year? Tune into PR 2 in 2 months time.)

# Advertising

We'll be taking advertising in PROGRESS REPORTS 2 and 3 and also in the PROGRAMME BOOK. They will be produced A5 size. Adverts may be submitted A4 size or A5 though we prefer A4 ready for reduction. Rates are:-

| PROGRESS REPORTS | Professional | Non-Professional |
|---|---|---|
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| Third-page ( " " 7" x 3½") | 7.00 | 5.00 |
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| Full-page (sizes as above) | 25.00 | 16.00 |
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In all cases, dimensions are given width x height. All copy should be black on white camera ready. Half-tones will be charged at £4.00 extra per advert. We'll be glad to quote for any special requirements such as bleeding-off, reversals, etc.

All queries regarding advertising should be addressed to Rog Peyton at the address at the end of this PR, (daytime phone number is 021-643 1999).

Deadlines for advertising - Copy must be received no later than these dates:-
PROGRESS REPORT 2 (published early August) - July 15th 1982
PROGRESS REPORT 3 (published early October) - September 15th 1982.
PROGRAMME BOOK (issued at NOVACON 12) - copy must be received by September 30th but the space must be booked by September 1st 1982.

# Nova Awards

Full details of the Nova Awards (there are now three of them) will be given in PROGRESS REPORT 2 but in the meantime, we thought it would be a good idea to run some fanzine reviews. And who better than the one and only Kev Smith - winner of this year's TAFF race - to give his views on the current UK scene. This, we hope, will be an ongoing column through all three Progress Reports.

# FANZINES ON THE RUN

## Kev Smith

This is the brand new Novacon fanzine review column, intended to help all you lovely Novacon members to know just what the hell you're doing when you vote in the Nova Award at Novacon 12. As such, it seems entirely appropriate to start with the current title holder and champeen of Great Brit-tain -- Tappen!

Tappen 3 appeared in time for Novacon 11 and thus maintained the bi-monthly publishing schedule Malcolm Edwards seemed to have set himself, and which he has since dispensed with. It contains, as in only two issues we have come to expect, articles of varying quality by undoubtedly good writers, linked by Malcolm's reflections on this and that. Actually, the links are tenuous, and a little forced, but that doesn't matter much.

Chris Evans does a report on Unicon 2 in terms of the problems he had with various of his bodily functions during it. The conrep, of course, is renowned as the most deceptively difficult of the 'standard' fannish pieces. It takes a very good writer to convey to a reader sitting on his own that exact feeling of communal euphoria and slight craziness that makes a good con so enjoyable. Most fanwriters fail, and seem to realise whilst writing that they are going to fail, so that they end with an implied "Well, it was funny at the time", which doesn't convince our solitary reader a bit. Chris is a good writer, and 'bodily dis-functions' is a nice approach, but the piece is slow -- slower, surely, than Unicon 2 itself.

Dick Howett's 'Last Exit to Gatwick' tells a couple of funny stories well enough, but the piece is unstructured. It seems to be more an extract from a long article making a point in a particularly meandering fashion than a stand-alone piece.

The regular 'Desert Island Disco' spot is taken this time by Chris Atkinson, who uses the format in the way it should be used: to talk about herself rather than the dratted music. None of this crap about agonising over which eight banal records to choose -- "Oh, it's so difficult, my dear!" -- just pick eight and tell eight stories. It's not as good as 'Life With The Loonies' (I suspect that will haunt Chris for years to come), but it's good.

So is part five of 'The Transatlantic Hearing Aid', Dave Langford's TAFF trip report. Dave is one of the few who can do a good conrep, and a TAFF report is similar. His style is so precise, so compact, that he can convincingly give the impression of six things happening at once. This piece is fairly typical of his fannish writing, and uses a nice framing device -- writing about himself writing about his trip -- which both provides a 'story so far' for new readers, and enables him to comment on the events at a distance which the immediate style of the main narrative would not permit without severe stylistic lapses. Oh yes it does!

The final article is by Chris Priest (Tappen, the Chrisian fanzine) on the art and pitfalls of writing dirty books. This is a well written, well structured article with hardly a wasted word. No fancy tricks or stylistic gimmickry, just some straightforward writing that winds itself up, lets itself go, and winds down to a satisfactory ending. Good stuff.

A good start for another Nova, I'd say.

Start Breaking Up should really, it seems, have been Stop Breaking Down 8, except that Greg Pickersgill didn't get round to it in time, causing a revolt amongst his staff writers which induced them to do a fanzine themselves. It contains a number of twiddly bits which I can take or leave, especially leave, and two main articles by said staff writers, Linda Pickersgill and Chris Atkinson.

Chris's is a Silicon 5 report. I suppose everyone has to have a couple of goes at a conrep, but I'm afraid that Chris has to give it best this time. It isn't bad, but it isn't outstanding either.

Highlight of the issue is Linda's 'Best Popcorn in Town', about drive-in movies. That, at least, is the ostensible theme, but in the same way that Chris's 'Desert Island Disco' in Tappen 3 is about records. It is in two parts. Part one, not actually called that, is about a specific visit to a drive-in, but it is given a timeless quality by Linda's use of the historic present tense to tell the tale. I'm usually averse to the historic present. It should only be used when certain specific effects are desired and not, as too often happens, as an arbitrary alternative to the past tense. One of these effects, curiously enough, is to impart a sense of timelessness. If a story is told now when it obviously can't be now (because now is me sitting here reading it) then it must be anytime. So, in 'Best Popcorn...', we have the contrast of a specific event with a timeless narrative style, and it works well. Of course, you have to be a good writer to do it well. Linda is, and does.

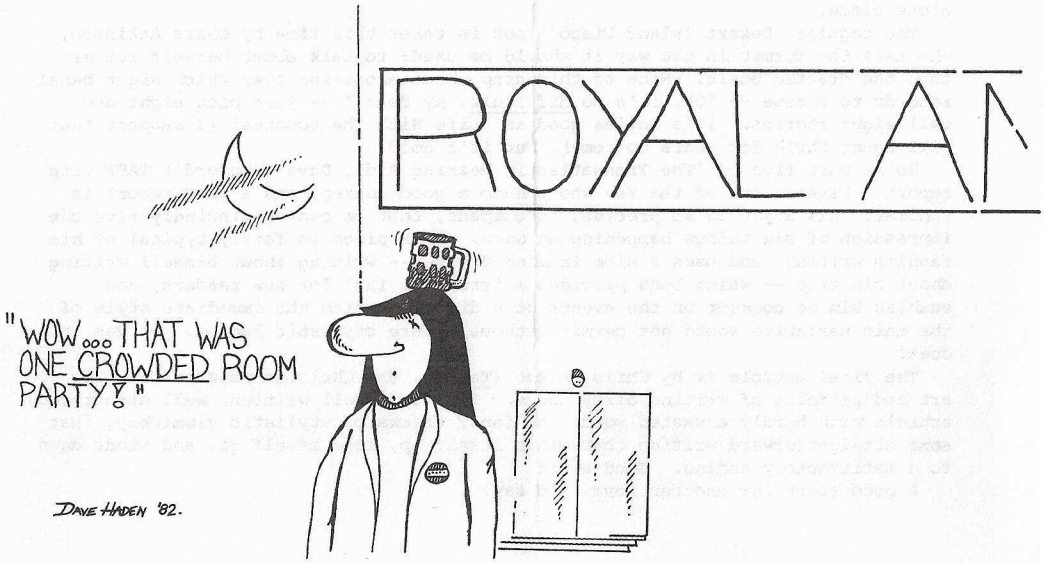
Part two reverses the contrast: more generalised, less detailed events, but precisely located in time -- "When I was five... sixteen... a teacher..." -- by use of the past tense.

The two parts together are very evocative. For a time I was hankering after the lost drive-ins of my youth -- and I've never been to a drive in.

If they do another issue, Start Breaking Up ought to be a contender.

Deadloss 3 from Chris Priest is a fanzine about fanzines; in other words, it contains nothing but fanzine reviews. Mind you, they are some of the best, most entertaining fanzine reviews seen in many a long year. (I didn't agree with all of them, by the way.)

And that is all I'm going to say about Deadloss 3. Reviewing fanzine reviews, as I've said before, is a path that spirals quickly in to madness.



Eve Harvey's Wallbanger had always been a pretty ordinary fanzine until it discovered neofans! Roy Macinski, Martyn Taylor, Brian Smith -- who, last October, had heard of these people in fanzines? And yet here they were, filling the pages of the best Wallbanger yet, number 5. It had Arnold Akien, too, who received one vote as best new fan of the year in the second Pong Poll. (So did Joseph Nicholas, actually. What do these Americans know, anyway?)

Roy's article is a very careful, quite nicely written piece describing how he came into fandom. It boils down to an unlikely string of coincidences -- which is how we all got in... In the course of it, Roy said that he did not consider himself a good writer, but was going to give it a try anyway. More power to his elbow. A 'natural' he may not be, but this 'try' was pretty good.

Martyn Taylor I have always thought of as the Barry Norman of Paperback Inferno, always seeming to have a carefully prepared, acerbic comment to hand. His 'Urban Renewal' is a tale of confrontation with a young thug in a bus queue, spoilt by an over-long introduction explaining how Eve trapped him into writing it in the first place. An introduction that takes up three fifths of an article -- as this does -- tends to unbalance it.

John Harvey tells the latest in his sacking saga in 'Diary of a Househusband'. I feel quite at liberty to be flippant about such a sombre subject since John himself refuses to be totally serious and sombre about it. Not that he thinks it the funniest thing since Hannibal invented the elephant joke ("You're taking them where?"); a certain wistfulness, no more, about wanting a job again does come through.

Brian Smith (no relation) writes about drink in 'Shaken but not Stirred'. To those of us who know Brian this comes as no surprise. He, too, has an introduction about how Eve trapped him. Trapper John, move over... If Martyn Taylor is Barry Norman, then Brian is Alan Whicker, possibly. For one who seems to have written so little, and who has such an unlikely shape, his writing style is extremely smooth, very clear, and rather concentrated. Excuse me, I feel an inexplicable urge to drink some fifteen year old malt whisky...

Wallbanger 5 is rounded off with a piece by Eve herself on going to an Ultravox concert. A bit laboured, this; Eve has a tendency to write fanzine articles a bit like lectures. Not, I stress, that she has a lecturing tone. Rather it is a matter of technique: "say what you're going to say, say it, say what you've said". It is good lecture technique, designed to get the message across and ram home the important facts. It's not a bad way to approach the polemical fannish article, either. However, it doesn't work so well in 'anecdotal reportage' mode; at least, not in its raw state. You have either to disguise the introductory and concluding sections so that they don't look like summaries of the main body of the article, or else to use a different type of introduction and conclusion that aren't summaries of the main body. Within the main body it is also good lecture technique to use little introductions and conclusions, and again Eve does this, and again it doesn't work in this sort of writing.

In her linking paragraphs between articles, Eve is admirably concise and to the point, doing the job very effectively. She doesn't possess the fluency of a Malcolm Edwards, and wisely doesn't try to fake it.

Wallbanger 5 is worth a look.

Jimmy Robertson's Twentythird 5 is a personalzine in which Jimmy writes about anything that takes his fancy: how to judge fanzines, taking exams, how the news is reported, fannish cliques -- a devastating little anecdote, this, told against himself and his friends --, Tamla Motown and the death of Tammi Terrell, a few letters.

He writes in short bursts; no subject lasts more than a page, or is related to the subjects around it. When there is a mian point -- which is usually -- it is driven home hard. He plays hell with English grammar. Words are forced together in the way he wants them, but though the grammar isn't English-as-she-is-taught, it is consistent, and it is rare that his meaning is ambiguous.

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I first read this issue on the Friday night of Novacon 11, whilst pissed, and I thought it was great. I'm not sure it will stand much re-reading, but that initial impact was something.

These were the best of the fanzines that appeared at or around Novacon 11. I don't intend to spend any time in this column on the no-hopers; that would be a bit beside the point. Next time -- if Rog lets me -- I'll look at the best since then: the Christmas and New Year fanzines, if you like.

FANZINES REVIEWED

Tappen 3, October 1981, Malcolm Edwards, 28 Duckett Rd, London N4.

Start Breaking Up, October 1981, Chris Atkinson, 28 Duckett Rd, London N4, and Linda Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London W5.

Deadloss 3, October 1981, Chris Priest, 1 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Rd, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 ODA.

Wallbanger 5, October 1981, Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Rd, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3QH.

Twentythird 5, November 1981, Jimmy Robertson, 64 Hamilton Rd, Bellshill, Lanarkshire, ML4 1AG.

# Convention Members

The list below covers all persons registered up to June 1st 1982. This PR is going out to all those registered for NOVACON 11 as well. If your name does not appear on the list below, you will not be receiving further Progress Reports. If, however, you wish to register for NOVACON 12, the registration fee is £6.00 (full) or £3.00 (supporting). Supporting membership allows you to receive Progress Reports, the Programme Book, Special GoH book, badge, etc. It does not allow you to attend the convention. For that, you require full membership. Registrations should be sent to Eunice Pearson at the address at the end of this PR.

ARE YOU REGISTERED? CHECK THIS LIST....

1 HARRY HARRISON
2 Joan Harrison
3 Rog Peyton
4 Arline Peyton
5 Eunice Pearson
6 Phill Probert
7 Dave Hardy
8 Chris Baker
9 Brian Aldiss
10 Steve Green
11 Colin Fine
12 Kate Hoare
13 Martin Hoare
14 Bob Jewett
15 Harry Bell
16 Ye Gerbish
17 Anthony Heathcote
18 John Stewart
19 Howard Rosenblum
20 Peter Mabey
21 Mark Granks
22 Jeff Suter
23 Andrew Stephenson
24 Kathy Westhead
25 Mike Westhead
26 Roger Perkins
27 ½r Cruttenden
28 Bernie Morton
29 G Lawrence
30 Richard Cooper
31 Roger Robinson
32 Sue Booth
33 Chris Jennings
34 J Stewart
35 M Porter
36 B Day
37 Paul Dormer
38 M Damesick
39 Paul Foster
40 Mike Scantlebury
41 Lord 'B' Phil
42 Joe Nicholas
43 P Thompson
44 Chris Lake
45 D Thomas
46 Martin Stallard
47 Chris Southern
48 Jenny Southern
49 Martin Reed
50 Fay Symes
51 Dave Symes
52 Paul Kincaid
53 Jim Barker
54 Mickey Poland

55 Tony Berry
56 Dai Price
57 Kev Smith
58 D D Ellis
59 Chris Donaldson
60 Paul Oldroyd
61 Owen Whiteoak
62 Janice Maule
63 Ian Maule
64 Marcus Rowland
65 Martin Easterbrook
66 Margaret Austin
67 Jonathon Cowie
68 Rory McLean
69 Dave Raggett
70 Paul Wilson
71 Joy Hibbert
72 Dave Rowley
73 Paul Vincent
74 Linda Pickersgill
75 Greg Pickersgill
76 Caroline Mullan
77 John Ballman
78 Steve Lawson
79 R Farnbrough
80 Julian Headlong
81 Timothy Headlong
82 Tim Illingworth
83 Mike Walshe
84 Edward Ward
85 Charles Mawdsley
86 Hazel Faulkner
87 Neil Faulkner
88 Linda Ternet
89 George Ternet
90 Kev Clarke
91 Trish Hall
92 Chris Hall
93 John Wilkes
94 Pete Gilligan
95 Sue Gadd
96 Mick Gadd
97 Steve Davies
98 Pete Wareham
99 Hazel Langford
100 Dave Langford
101 Dave Haden
102 Barbara Rudyk
103 Simon Rudyk
104 Joyce Slater
105 Ken Slater
106 Brian Smith
107 Tony Chester
108 Chris Suslowicz
109 Rob Hansen
110 Simon Strong
111 Ian Sheppard
112 Sue Williams
113 Kev Williams
114 John Jarrold
115 Michael Hamilton
116 Mike Ford
117 Jim Darroch
118 A Boyd-Newton
119 Chris Bursey
120 Andrew Hall
121 Gerry Webb
122 Kay Allen
123 Jerry Elsmore
124 Simon Beresford
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127 Ro Pardoe
128 Darroll Pardoe
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130 Rob Jackson
131 L Norman
132 S Andrews
133 Pete Lyon
134 A Ferguson
135 Wendy Glover
136 Joan Patterson
137 'Tibs'
138 M J Lynes
139 Peggy White
140 James White
141 Ian Sorenson
142 Dave Pringle
143 Jean Maudsley
144 Richard Johnson
145 Alvian Nixon
146 Pete Weston
147 Kevin Easthope
148 Pauline Morgan
149 Chris Morgan
150 Su Worrall
151 Ken Worrall
152 David Gibson
153 T R Robinson
154 John Robinson
155 Jane Whittaker
156 Neil Thompson
157 David Bell
158 Pam Wells
159 Brian Pinder
160 Susan Hepple
161 Neil Hepple
162 David Breen
163 Eve Harvey
164 John Harvey
165 Audrey Kellow
166 Simon Bostock
167 Sue Chamberlain
168 Carol Bennett

COMMITTEE ADDRESSES

Rog Peyton (Chairman), 19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham B32 3QL.
Phill Probert (Treasurer), Apt 2, 1 Broughton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 20.
Eunice Pearson (Registrations), Ditto.
Chris Baker (Art Show), 88 Willows Road, Cannon Hill, Birmingham B12 9QD.
Dave Hardy (Art Show/Films), 99 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 OAB.

Thanks to Phill Probert for the cover of this PR and to Kev Clarke and Dave Haden for the cartoons.